

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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UNCLAS SECTION 1 OF 2 DUBLIN 1519

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, EI
SUBJECT: CASUALTIES OF THE IRISH GENERAL ELECTION

REF: (A) DUBLIN 1464, (B) DUBLIN 1488

SUMMARY:

A NUMBER OF TOP IRISH POLITICIANS HAVE LEFT POLITICS AS A RESULT OF THE IRISH GENERAL ELECTION. THEY INCLUDE PARTY LEADERS COSGRAVE AND CORISH, PROMINENT CABINET MINISTERS O'BRIEN, KEATING AND COONEY, AND SEVERAL PROMISING JUNIOR ASPIRANTS. GREATER POLITICAL POWER FOR WOMEN HAS NOT BEEN ADVANCED. DESPITE THE CASUALTIES AND THE BLOW TO FINE GAEIL AND LABOR, WE DO NOT BELIEVE THE BASIC POLITICAL BALANCE IN IRISH POLITICS HAS BEEN ALTERED SUBSTANTIALLY. END SUMMARY

1. THE REFTELS DESCRIBED THE RETIREMENT FROM ACTIVE POLITICS OF FINE GAEIL PARTY LEADER COSGRAVE AND LABOR PARTY LEADER CORISH. OTHER LUMINARIES ON THE IRISH POLITICAL SCENE HAVE ALSO BEEN CASUALTIES OF THE JUNE 16 GENERAL ELECTION.

2. PERHAPS THE BEST KNOWN INTERNATIONALLY OF THE LOSERS WAS DR. CONOR CRUISE O'BRIEN, MINISTER IN THE OUTGOING GOVERNMENT,
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WHO LOST HIS PARLIAMENTARY SEAT IN THE ELECTION. QUOTE THE CRUISE, UNQUOTE AS HE IS FAMILIARLY KNOWN HERE, HAS ALREADY ANNOUNCED HIS INTENTION OF RUNNING FOR THE SENATE. (ELECTION AUGUST 16). WHETHER HE WINS OR LOSES THERE, IT SEEMS THAT MUCH OF HIS POLITICAL INFLUENCE WILL HAVE GONE. IN ACTUAL FACT, O'BRIEN NEVER HAD MUCH POLITICAL INFLUENCE OR FOLLOWING IN THE REPUBLIC, THOUGH HE HAS BEEN A FAVORITE OF JOURNALISTS

AND INTELLECTUALS. HIS ICONOCLASTIC VIEWS ON THE NORTHERN IRELAND SITUATION HAVE MADE HIM A PARTICULAR FAVORITE WITH BRITISH JOURNALISTS. WE REGRET TO SEE THIS INTELLIGENT, ERUDITE, WITTY PERSON REMOVED FROM THE ACTIVE POLITICAL SCENE, BUT EXPECT HIM TO CONTINUE AN ACTIVE ROLE AS A SOCIAL CRITIC, POLITICAL ANALYST, HISTORIAN, LITERARY CRITIC, AND PERHAPS RESUMING SOME KIND OF INTERNATIONAL CAREER.

3. OTHER CASUALTIES INCLUDE OUTGOING LABOR PARTY MINISTER OF INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE, JUSTIN KEATING, WHO ALSO LOST HIS SEAT IN PARLIAMENT. KEATING HAS GAINED A GOOD REPUTATION IN INTERNATIONAL CIRCLES. HE APPARENTLY LOST HIS SEAT BECAUSE HE DID NOT SUFFICIENTLY TEND TO HIS CONSTITUENTS. HOWEVER, AT AGE 47 HE WILL PROBABLY MAKE A COMEBACK. HE WILL ALSO RUN FOR THE SENATE, WHICH IS A TRADITIONAL HOLDING PATTERN FOR IRISH POLITICIANS.

4. ANOTHER COALITION MINISTER WHO LOST HIS DAIL SEAT WAS JUSTICE MINISTER PATRICK COONEY. THIS CASUALTY IS SIGNIFICANT BECAUSE COONEY WAS THE HEIR APPARENT TO COSGRAVE FOR LEADERSHIP OF THE FINE GAEIL PARTY. HIS LOSS, AND HE APPEARS TO BE FINISHED IN POLITICS, EASES THE WAY FOR GARRET FITZGERALD'S ACCESSION AS PARTY LEADER. COONEY'S REJECTION ALSO COULD POSSIBLY MEAN THAT THERE HAS BEEN A NEGATIVE REACTION AMONG VOTERS TO THE HARD, TOUGH QUOTE LAW AND ORDER UNQUOTE POLICY. THIS, HOWEVER, IS NOT CLEAR AS COONEY HAS ALWAYS HAD A RATHER UNCLASSIFIED

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MARGINAL SEAT AND PROBABLY LOST IN THE GENERAL FIANNA FAIL LANDSLIDE MOSTLY ON ECONOMIC ISSUES.

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5. MINOR BUT SIGNIFICANT CASUALTIES INCLUDE: A. LABOR T.D. BRENDAN HALIGAN WHO HAD SWITCHED OVER TO A NEW CONSTITUENCY FOR THE ELECTION AND NARROWLY LOST IN THE GENERAL LANDSLIDE. HE HAS NOW REVERTED TO HIS OLD POSITION AS PARTY SECRETARY AND WILL POSSIBLY WIN A SENATE SEAT. BRENDAN IS BY FAR THE OUTSTANDING THEORETICIAN OF THE LABOR PARTY, A WELL KNOWN FIGURE IN THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC SET, AND HIS SETBACK IS QUOTE A LOSS FOR THE PARTY. HE SHOULD, HOWEVER, REMAIN INFLUENTIAL. B. PADDY DUNNE, LAST YEAR'S DUBLIN LORD MAYOR, WHO LOST TO A LEFT WING INDEPENDENT LABOR MAVERICK, NOEL BROWNE. PADDY IS AN ATTRACTIVE PERSONALITY WHO HAD GOOD CHANCES BUT IS QUITE PROBABLY FINISHED NOW. HE IS AN EXAMPLE OF THE PLETHORA OF TALENTED LABOR POLITICIANS WHO CONTENTED FOR A FEW SEATS. C: SENATOR MARY ROBINSON WHO CAME WITHIN AN EYELASH OF WINNING HER FIRST SEAT IN THE DAIL, BUT AS A LABOR CANDIDATE AGAIN LOST IN THE LANDSLIDE. MS. ROBINSON WAS THE BEST HOPE OF A NUMBER OF QUALIFIED WOMEN WHO TRIED FOR SEATS. ONLY 6 WOMEN WERE ELECTED, AND ALL WERE WIDOWS, DAUGHTERS, OR ONE (SILE DE VALERA) GRANDAUGHTERS OF HALLOWED POLITICIANS. THERE IS A POSSIBILITY THAT JACK LYNCH WILL APPOINT ONE TOKEN WOMEN TO HIS JUNIOR CABINET, BUT THE FACT REMAINS THAT THE AGE OF FEMALE POLITICAL POWER IN IRELAND HAS NOT ARRIVED.

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COMMENT:

WITH THE DEFEAT OF THE FINE GAEIL - LABOR COALITION, IT WOULD BE LOGICAL TO ASSUME THAT ANY EFFECTIVE PROPOSITION TO FIANNA FAIL HAS ALSO BEEN A CASUALTY IN THIS ELECTION. HOWEVER, THIS IS A PREMATURE ASSUMPTION. THE LANDSLIDE TURNOVER SEEMS TO BE A GENERAL REJECTION OF SEVERAL YEARS OF ECONOMIC HARDSHIP. IF THE TWO OPPOSITION PARTIES CAN GET THEMSELVES TOGETHER UNDER NEW LEADERSHIP, IT IS QUITE POSSIBLE THAT FIANNA FAIL WILL HAVE AN EFFECTIVE OPPOSITION IN THE NEXT FOUR-PLUS YEARS. IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT FIANNA FAIL CAN SOLVE IRELAND'S ECONOMIC PROBLEMS.

WE SHOULD ALSO NOTE THAT IN THE ELECTION DEBACLE LABOR DID NOT DO TOO BADLY, LOSING ONLY TWO SEATS. FINE GAEIL LOST TWELVE SEATS. THE SMALL LABOR PARTY HAS GENERALLY MAINTAINED ITS PROPORTION OF THE ELECTORATE, (ABOUT 11 PERCENT), AND IF FIRST POST-ELECTION ANALYSES ARE CORRECT,

LABOR HAS MADE GOOD A CLAIM TO A NATIONAL ELECTORATE EVEN UNDER
DIFFICULT TIMES. DESPITE THE ELECTION RESULT, THERE IS NO
REASON TO EXPECT THAT THE LONG-TIME IRISH POLITICAL BALANCE
BETWEEN THE BIG FIANNA FAIL PARTY, ON ONE SIDE AND THE FINE
GAEL AND SMALL LABOR ON THE OTHER SIDE IS FINISHED. INCIDENTALLY,
THE ELECTION ALSO DEMONSTRATED AGAIN THAT LEFT WING AND/OR
REPUBLICAN PARTIES HAVE NO SIGNIFICANT FOLLOWING IN THE REPUBLIC.
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